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The Reflector.
THURSDAY, MAY 29, 1890.
(Continued from Last Week.)
DUNRAVEN RANCH

A Story of American Frontier Life.

By Capt. CHARLES KING, U. S. A.,
Author of "The Colonel's Daughter," "From
the Banks," "The Deserter," Etc.

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"Thank you very much. I wish you
would not trouble yourself. I presume
I can go over to those stable building, or
wherever it is the men sleep; they would
be most apt to know if our sergeant has
been seen."

"Oh, no! it is no trouble; besides, they
are all asleep over there by this time, I
fancy. They have to be out very early,
don't you know?"

But Perry had stepped inside even as
he offered to go elsewhere—a fact that
the girl had not been slow to notice, for
a quizzical little shadow of a smile hovered
for an instant at the corners of her pretty
mouth. "Pray sit down," she said, as she
vanished into an adjoining room, leaving
Ned Perry standing gazing after her,
spelled bound.

He listened to the swish of her trailing
skirts through the dimly lighted room
beyond, through an invisible hallway,
and then to the quick pit-pat of her
feet up some uncarpeted stairway. He
heard her moving quickly, lightly, along
the corridor of the upper story until the
footfalls were lost at the rear of the
house, then a distant tap upon a door-
way, and a soft voice, barely audible,
calling, "Papa." He heard her speak
again, as though in response to inquiry
from within; he heard her raise her
voice, as though to repeat an answer to
a previous question, and this time her
words were distinct. "An officer from the
fort," she announced; and then fol-
lowed a momentary silence.

He heard a door quickly opened; he
heard men's voices in low, eager, excited
talk; he heard her sweet tones once
more, as though in exostulation, saying
something about the sergeant, lost or
wounded, and they were merely inquiring
for him; he heard a stern, harsh in-
junction of "Silence! that will do!" some
quick, hurrying footsteps, a man's spurred
boots descending some staircase at the
back of the house, a colloquy aloft in
fainter tones, and then—closing doors
and silence.

He waited five—ten minutes, and still
no one came; but the murmur of voices
in subdued but earnest controversy was
again audible on the second floor, and
at last a door was opened and he heard
the same stern tones that had commanded
her silence before, and this time they said:

"That is entirely my affair! I will
see the gentleman myself, and let him
know my opinion of this impudent and
—burlesque intrusion."
"Where?" whispered Mr. Perry to him-
self at sound of these menacing words.
"This is bearding the lion in his den
with a vengeance! Now trot out you
'Douglas in his hall,' and let's see what
it all means. I've seen the girl, anyhow,
and he can't take that back, even if he
turns me out."

He heard a heavy step, accented by
the sharp, energetic prodding of a cane;
it came slowly along the hall, slowly
and majestically down the stairs, slowly
into the lower front room, and presently
there loomed forth from the darkness
into the broad glare of the astrals at the
hanging portiere the figure of a tall,
gray haired, spectacled, slily built and
fragile looking Englishman, erect as
pride and high spirit could hold a
man against the ravages of
age and rheumatism, sharp, stern
and imperious of mood, as every glance
and every feature plainly told; vehement
and passionate, almost twitching lips
and frowning brows and angry, snapping
eyes belied him; a man who had suffered
much, unless the deep lines and shadows
under eyes and mouth meant nothing
but advancing years, a man who entered
full of wrath and resentment at this
invasion of his privacy—the forcing of his
guard lines, and yet—a gentleman,
unless Ned Perry's instincts were all of
little worth.

The young soldier had been standing
by a center table, coolly scanning the
pictures on the walls, and determining
to present a rather exaggerated picture
of nonchalance as reward for the hostile
language of the proprietor of Dunraven.
He expected to hear an outburst of in-
vective when that gentleman reached the
room; but no sooner had he passed the
portiere than he halted short, and Mr.
Perry, turning suddenly, was amazed at
the pale, startled, yet yearning look in
his quivering face.

The moment the young man confronted
him there came a sudden change. It
was with evident effort that he con-
trolled himself, and then, after brief
searching study of Perry's face, accented
him, coldly and with sarcastic emphasis:
"To what circumstance do I owe the
honor of this intrusion?"

"I regret you so consider it, Mr. Mait-
land, as I believe you to be"—The old
gentleman bowed "with stately dignity."
"One of our men, a sergeant, rode down
this way quite early this morning and
failed to return. His horse came back
bleeding at sunset, and we feared some
accident or trouble. Searching parties
are out all over the prairie, and the col-
onel ordered me to inquire here."

"Does your colonel take us for band-
itti here, and ascribe our desertions
and accidents to our machinations?"
"Far from it, sir, but rather as a hos-
pitable refuge to which the injured man
had been conveyed," answered Perry,
with a quiet smile, determined to show
the hauteur of Dunraven's lord if cour-
tesy of manner could effect it.

"He is utterly mistaken, then," an-
swered the Englishman, "and I resent
it, sir, this forcing of my gates after
the explicit understanding we had last
year. As a soldier I presume you
had to obey your orders; but I beg you
to tell your colonel that his order was an
affront to me personally, in view of what
has passed between us."

"Nothing has passed between you,
Mr. Maitland," answered Perry, a little
tartly now. "We have reached Fort
Rossiter only within the last fortnight,
and know nothing whatever of your
understandings with previous command-
ers. Permit me to ask you one question

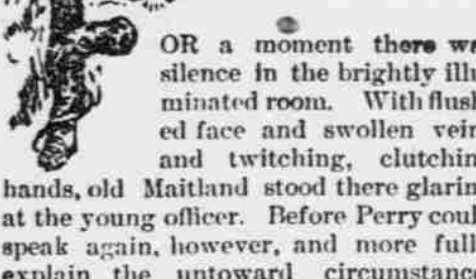
and I will retire. Have you heard any-
thing of our sergeant?"
"Nothing, sir. I would hardly be apt to
hear, for my people here are enjoined to
keep strictly to our limits, and all we
ask of our neighbors is that they keep to
theirs. I presume you have destroyed
my fences, sir, in order to effect an en-
trance."

"Upon my word, Mr. Maitland, you
make me rather regret that I did not;
but I had the decency to respect what I
had happened to hear of your wishes,
and so left my horse and my men out-
side and footed it a good half mile in the
dark."

"Ah! that sounds very like it!" replied
Mr. Maitland, with writhing lips, for at
this moment there came the dull thun-
der of rapidly advancing hoof beats, and
before either man could speak again
three troopers with a led horse and four
steeds panting from their half mile race
—reined up in front of the eastern por-
tice in the full glare of the lights, and
the sergeant's voice was heard eagerly
hailing his lieutenant.

"My luck again!" groaned Perry. "I
told them to come in half an hour if they
didn't hear from me, and of course they
came."

CHAPTER VII.



OR a moment there was
silence in the brightly illu-
minated room. With flush-
ed face and swollen veins
and twitching, clutching
hands, old Maitland stood there glaring
at the young officer. Before Perry could
speak again, however, and more fully
explain the untoward circumstance,
there came a rush of hurrying footsteps
without, and the sound of excited voices.
The next minute they heard an eager,
angry challenge, and Perry recognized
the voice of the overseer or manager
whom he had met in the morning.

"What do you fellows want here?"
was his brusque and loud inquiry as he
sprang from the piazza and stood con-
fronting the sergeant, who was quietly
seated in the saddle, and the question
was promptly echoed by three or four
burly men who, in shirt sleeves and
various styles of undress, came tumbling
in the wake of their leader and stood
now a menacing group looking up at the
silent troopers.

If there be one thing on earth that
will stir an Irishman's soul to its inmost
depths and kindle to instant flame the
latent heat of his pugnacity, it is just
such an inquiry in the readily recog-
nized accent of the hated "Sassenach."
Perry recognized the danger in a flash,
and, springing through the open casement,
interposed between the hostile parties.

"Not a word, Sergt. Leary. Here, Mr.
Manager, these men simply obeyed or-
ders, and I am responsible for any mis-
take. No harm was intended."
"Harm!" broke in one of the ranch-
men, with a demonstratively loud laugh.
"Harm be blowed! What harm could
you'd, I'd like to know? If the mas-
ter'll only say the word, we'd break your
heads in a minute."

"Quiet, now, Dick!" interposed the
overseer; but the other hands growled
approval, and Perry's eyes flashed with
anger at the insult. What reply he
might have made was checked by the
sight of Sergt. Leary throwing himself
from the saddle and tossing his reins to
one of the men. He knew well enough
what that meant, and sprang instantly
in front of him.

"Back to your horse, sir! Back, in-
stantly!" for the sergeant's face was fierce
with rage. "Mount, I say!" added the
lieutenant, as the sergeant still hesitated,
and even the sense of discipline could not
keep the mounted troopers from a mut-
tered word of encouragement. Slowly,
wrathfully, reluctantly, the soldier
obeyed, once turning furiously back as
jeering taunts were hurled at him from
among the ranchmen, unbuckled by their
manager. "Now move off with your
men to the gate. Leave my horse, and
wait for me there. Go!" added the young
officer, sternly, and, with bitter moti-
vation at heart and a curse stifled on his
quivering lips, the Irishman turned his
horse's head away and slowly walked him
in the indicated direction.

"Now, Mr. Manager," said Perry,
turning fiercely to the older Eng-
lishman, "I have done my best to re-
strain my men; do you look out for
yours. You have allowed them to insult
me and mine, and you may thank your
stars that discipline prevailed with my
people, though you have nothing of the
kind here."

"Your men have cut down our fences,
by your order, I presume," said the man-
ager, coolly, "and it's lucky for them
they got out of the way when they did.
We have a right to protect our property
and eject intruders, and"—
"I came here to inquire for a missing
man—a right even an Englishman can-
not deny us on these prairies. We had
excellent reason to believe him injured,
and thought, not knowing you for the
inhospitable gang you are, that he might
have been carried in here for treatment;
there was no other place. Your prop-
rietary tells me he is not here. After
what I've seen of your people, I have
reason to be still more anxious about
him. Scant mercy a single trooper
would have had at their hands. Now I
ask you, do you know or have you heard
of a cavalry soldier being seen around
here during the day?"

Perry was standing holding his horse
by the curb as he spoke, facing the par-
lor windows and confronting the angry
group of ranchmen. Within, though
nearer the window than he had left him,
was the bent form of the owner of Dun-
raven, leaning on his cane and appar-
ently impatiently striving to make himself
heard as he came forward. Before the
manager could answer, he was com-
pelled to turn about and rebuke his men,
two of whom were especially truculent
and menacing. Finally he spoke:

"I have heard nothing, but I tell you
frankly that if any of your men have
been prowling around here it's more than
probable some one has got hurt. Has
there been any trouble today, men?" he
asked.

"By God, there will be if this ranch
isn't cleared in five minutes," was the
only answer.
"Don't make an ass of yourself, Hoko,"
growled the manager. "They are going
quick enough."

"I am going," said Perry, swinging
lightly into saddle; "and mind you this,
sir: I go with well warranted suspicion
that some of these bullies of yours have
been responsible for the non-appearance
of my stable sergeant. If he is not found
this night you may confidently look for
another visit. I say that to you also,
Mr. Maitland, and you owe it to our for-
bearance that there has been no blood-
shed here to-night."

Old Maitland's tremulous tones were
heard but a second in reply when he was
interrupted by a coarse voice from the
crowd of ranchmen, by this time in-
creased to nearly a dozen men. Some
of them were gathering about Perry as
he sat in the saddle, and an applauding
echo followed the last interruption.

"Give the swell a lift, Tummy; 'twill
teach him better manners."
Almost instantly Perry felt his right
foot grasped and a powerful form was
bending at the stirrup. He had heard
of the trick before. Many a time has
the London cad unhorsed the English
trooper, taken unawares, by hurling him
with sudden lift from below. But Perry
was quick and active as a cat. Seat and
saddle, too, were in his favor. He sim-
ply threw his weight on the left foot and
his bridle hand upon the pommel, let the
right leg swing over the horse's back un-
til released from the braying hand, then
back it came as he settled again in the
saddle, his powerful thighs gripping like
a vise; at the same instant, and before
his assailant could duck to earth and slip
out of the way, he had whipped out the
heavy Colt's revolver and brought it
butt with stunning crash down on the
ranchman's defenseless head.

There was instant rush and commotion.
In vain old Maitland feebly piped his
protests from the veranda; in vain the
overseer seized and held back one or two
of the men and furiously called off the
rest. Aided by the darkness which
veiled them, the others made a simulta-
neous rush upon the young officer and
sought to drag him from his plunging
horse. Perry held his pistol high in air,
threatened with the butt the nearest as-
sailant, yet loath to use further force.
He was still in the broad glare of the
parlor lights—a conspicuous mark; eager
hands had grasped his bridle rein at the
very bit, and he could not break away;
and then missiles began to fly about his
devoted head, and unless he opened his
eyes he would have been struck. He held
Nolan by the curb, half a dozen
others were hurling from the ambush
of darkness a scattering volley of wooden
bills and chunks of coal. He could
easily have shot down the men who held
him.

It was some temptation, for already he
had been struck and stung by unseen
projectiles; but just as the manager
sprang forward and with vigorous cuffs
induced the men to loose their hold on
his rein, there came three horsemen
charging full tilt into the crowd,
scattering the assailants right and left,
and this time our bucked, Sergt. Leary
leaped from the saddle and, with a rage
of fierce delight, pitched headlong into
battle with the biggest ranchman in his
way. And this was not all; for behind
him at a rapid trot came other troopers,
and in a moment the open space was
thronged with eager, wondering com-
rades—full half of Striker's company—
in whose overwhelming presence all
thought of promises and oaths seemed
to leave the ranchmen. They slipped
away in the darkness, leaving to their
employers the entire amusement of ac-
counting for their attack.

Leary was still fuming with wrath and
raging for further battle and shouting
into the darkness fierce invective at the
vanished head of his opponent. He
turned on the overseer himself, and but
for Perry's stern and sudden prohibition
would have had a round with him, but
was forced to content himself with the
information conveyed to all within hear-
ing that he'd "right away tin him" the
ranch contained if they'd only come out
where the lieutenant couldn't stop him.
The troopers were making eager inquiry
as to the causes of all the trouble, and
Leary, further difficulty, Perry promptly
ordered the entire party to "fall in."
Silence and discipline were restored in a
moment, and as the platoon formed rank
he inquired of a sergeant how they came
to be there. The reply was that it had
grown so dark on the prairie that further
search seemed useless, Capt. Striker and
most of the men had been drawn off by
signals from the Cheyennes up the val-
ley towards the post, and these men who
had been beyond Dunraven on the north-
ern prairie were coming back along the
Morse trail when they saw the lights
and heard voices at the lower shore.
There they found Leary, who was excit-
ed about something, and before they had
time to ask he suddenly shouted, "They're
killin' the lieutenant. Come on, boys!"
and galloped off with his own party; so
they followed. Perry quietly ordered
them to leave a corporal and four men
with him, and told the senior sergeant
to march the others back to the post; he
would follow in five minutes. Then he
turned to the manager.

"You will have to put up with my
keeping some of my men with me, in
view of all the circumstances," he said,
coldly. "But after this exhibition of
lawlessness on the part of your people I
do not propose to take any chances. I
want to say to you that it is my belief
that some of those ruffians you employ
can tell what has become of our missing
man, and that you will do well to in-
vestigate to-night. As to you, Mr. Mait-
land," he said, turning to the old gentle-
man, who had sunk into a low easy
chair, "much as I regret having dis-
turbed your privacy and—that of the
ladies of your household, you will ad-
mire that justice to my men and to the
service demands that I should report my
suspicions and my reception here to the
commanding officer at Fort Rossiter."

There was no reply.
"I wish you good night, sir," said
Perry; but his eyes wandered in to the
lighted parlor in search of a very differ-
ent face and form—and still there was
no answer.

The manager came back upon the pi-
azza and stepped rapidly towards them.
Perry quickly dismounted and bent
down over the crouching figure.
"Why, here!" he suddenly exclaimed,
"your employer is faint, or—something's
gone wrong."

"Hush!" was the low spoken, hurried
answer of the Englishman. "Just bear
a hand, will you, and help me to lift
him to yonder sofa?"
Easily, between them, they bore the

sight, attenuated form of the old man
into the lighted parlor. A deathly pallor
had settled on his face. His eyes were
closed, and he seemed fallen into a deep
swoon. Perry would have set a cushion
under his head as they laid him down on
a broad, easy couch, but the manager
jerked it away, lowering the gray hairs
to the very level of the back, so that the
mouth gaped wide and looked like death
itself.

"Just steady his head in that position
one minute, like a good fellow. I'll be
back in a twinkling," said the manager,
as he darted from the room and leaped
hurriedly up the hall stairway.
Perry heard him rap at a distant door,
apparently at the southwest angle of the
big house. Then his voice was calling:
"Mrs. Cowan! Mrs. Cowan! would you
have the goodness to come down quick!
the master's ill!"

Then, before any answer could be
given, another door opened aloft and
trailing skirts and light foot falls came
flashing down the stairway. Almost be-
fore he could turn to greet her, she was
in the room again, and with quick, im-
pulsive movement had thrown herself
on her knees by his side.

"Oh, papa! dear father! I was afraid
of this! Let me take his head on my
arm, so," she hurriedly murmured; "and
would you step in the other room and
fetch me a little brandy? 'Tis there on
the sideboard."

Perry sprang to do her bidding, found
a heavy decanter on the great oaken
buffet, half filled a glass, and brought it
with some water back to the lounge.
She stretched forth her hand, and, thank-
ing him with a grateful look from her
sweet, anxious eyes, took the liquor and
carried it carefully to her father's
ashen lips.

"Can I not help you in some way? Is
there no one I can call?" asked the young
soldier, as he bent over her.
"Mr. Ewen has gone for her—our old
nurse, I mean. She does not seem to be
in her room, and I fear she has gone over
to her son's—a young fellow at the store
house. Mr. Ewen has followed by this
time."

She dipped her slender white fingers
in the water and sprinkled the forehead
and eyelids of the prostrate man. A
feeble moan, followed by a deep drawn
sigh, was the only response. More brandy
poured into the gaping mouth seemed
only to strangle and distress him. No
sign of returning consciousness rewarded
her effort.

"If Mrs. Cowan would only come!
She has never failed us before; and we
so lean upon her at such a time."
"Pray tell me which way to go. Sure-
ly I can find her," urged Perry.
"Mr. Ewen must be searching for her
now, or he would have returned by this
time; and I dread being alone. I have
never been alone with my father when
he has had such a seizure."

Perry threw himself on his knees be-
side her, marveling at the old fate that
had so suddenly altered all the condi-
tions of his unlooked for visit. He seized
one of the long, tremulous hands that
lay so nerveless on the couch, and began
rapid and vigorous chafing and shapping.
Somewhere he had read or heard of wo-
men being restored from fainting spells by
just such means. Why should it not pre-
vail with the old man? He vaguely be-
thought him of burnt feathers, and looked
about for the discarded pillow, won-
dering if it might not be a brilliant idea
to cut it open and extract a handful and
set it ablaze under those broad and em-
inently aristocratic nostrils. Happily, he
was spared excuse for further experi-
ment. He felt that life was returning to
the hand he was so energetically
grooming, and that feeble but emphatic
protest against such heroic treatment
was manifest.

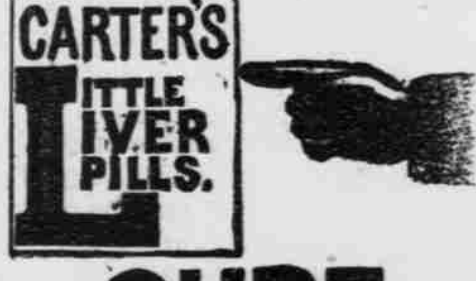
"I think he's coming to," he said,
"He's trying to pull away. Shall I
keep on?"
"Yes, do! Anything rather than have
him lie in this death like swoon."

Obviously he clung to his prize, rub-
bing and chafing hard, despite increasing
tug and effort. Then came another fee-
ble, petulant moan, and the hollow eyes
opened just as rapid footfalls were heard
on the veranda without and Mr. Ewen
rushed breathless and ruddy faced into
the room.

"Where on earth can that woman have
gone?" he panted. "I cannot find her
anywhere. Is he better, Miss Gladys?"
"Reviving, I think, thanks to Mr.—
thanks to you," she said, turning her
eyes full upon the kneeling figure at her
side and sending Perry's heart up into
his throat with delight at the gratitude
and kindness in her glance. She was
striving with one hand to unfasten the
scarf and collar at the old man's neck,
but making little progress.

[To be continued.]

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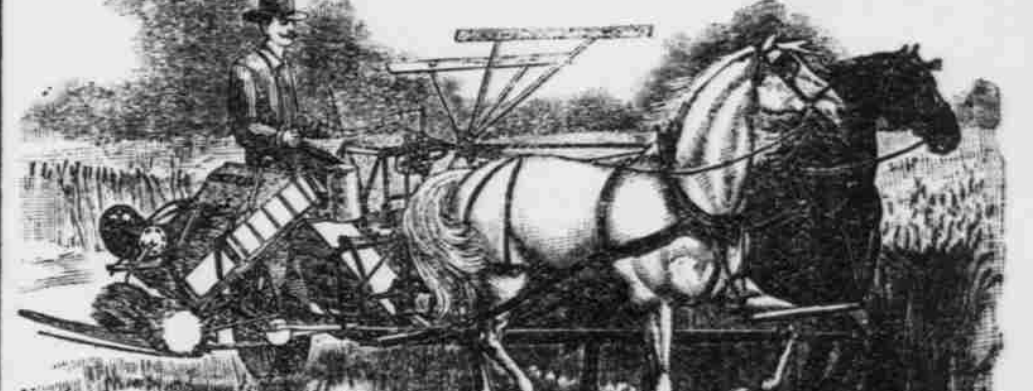
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